



CTE Standards Reform (Phase II): Agriculture Myths vs. Facts

Addressing your Questions

If you have a question that is not addressed below, please review the [Agriculture Frequently Asked Questions](#) document located on the [Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources website](#) or, send it directly to CTE.Questions@tn.gov. For questions on specific courses or standards implementation in the classroom, please contact the agriculture career cluster consultant directly at Steven.Gass@tn.gov or (615) 532-2847.

Facts about the Revised Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources Courses

Myth: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) teachers in Tennessee were not involved in the standards development process.

Fact: We value the input and experience of the CTE teachers across our state and teachers were a necessary part of our revision process, at multiple points:

- All AFNR teachers were given the opportunity to participate in a month-long, online survey to gather input on our existing standards. The responses to this survey were used to draft new standards and update existing courses and programs of study. Of the more than 540 surveys received from CTE teachers, more than 50 AFNR teachers in Tennessee responded. (The response rate of 16% for CTE teachers is a statistically representative sampling size.)
- During the standards process, experienced, effective Tennessee AFNR teachers were given roughly one week to review draft course standards within a specific program of study that aligned to their areas of personal expertise.
 - For example, an Agriculture teacher who was certified as a Veterinary Technician reviewed the Veterinary Science and Animal Science courses. Additional review time was granted for those who requested it and all submitted recommendations were accepted for review.
- All three grand divisions – urban and rural regions – were represented. The average teacher reviewer had 13 years of experience.
- At the conclusion of the review process, sample standards and courses were discussed at meetings of AFNR teacher representative bodies, such as the Tennessee Association of Agriculture Educators (TAAE) executive council, Team “Ag Ed,” and the Agriculture in the Classroom Advisory Committee, as well as the Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation.
- All AFNR teachers and external agriculture industry stakeholders have had an opportunity to impact the course standards before they are presented to the Tennessee State Board of Education for final reading in January by visiting the [Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources website](#) to see the proposed standards and sending feedback on the course standards to CTE.Questions@tn.gov by November 27, 2013.

Myth: A majority of AFNR teachers are not certified or do not meet the Highly Qualified status to teach Agriscience.

Fact: Less than 5% of our currently licensed AFNR teachers do not hold the Agriscience endorsement and are not highly qualified to teach Agriscience. Conversely, more than 95% of our currently licensed AFNR teachers are qualified to teach Agriscience.



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- Of the less than 5%, many have already qualified, or will qualify, for the Agriscience endorsement based on changes to the current teacher preparation and certification process.
- The Department of Education is currently contacting each impacted teacher individually to work with him/her to award the Agriscience endorsement.
- If you are a teacher and feel that you may be impacted, please reach out to the CTE Licensure Consultant, Penney Ashe, at Penney.S.Ashe@tn.gov.

Myth: *The merging of multiple courses into a new or revised course will require more textbook time, only allow time for overview content, and decrease hands-on opportunities for students.*

Fact: The use of multiple courses in the revision process did not involve the copying of exact standard competencies; instead, it was the identification and redistribution of knowledge and skills in order to allow for the scaffolding (or building) of content knowledge within the course(s). By doing this, there is a better progression of student skills development within the course and program of study.

- This logical progression of knowledge and skills will provide teachers flexibility in meeting the learning styles of their students and will result in a deeper conceptual understanding of particular topics.
- Lower-level tasks have been integrated into larger conceptual standards, reducing the number of competencies the teacher has to cover in the course. This will allow for an increase in available instructional time for the teacher to use for his/her students.
- Rather than specific content appearing in only one specialized course, more opportunities now exist for students to experience different aspects of Agriculture within multiple courses. Student experiences will be more in-depth and more robust – teachers are encouraged to focus their instructional time on concepts most relevant for students in their communities.

Myth: *Hunter Education has been removed with the retiring of the Wildlife Management Course.*

Fact: *Hunter Education, Boating Education, and other game laws should be covered in Standard 14 of the Natural Resource Management course. The exact certification programs have not been dictated. In fact, teachers have flexibility in how to meet this standard. We believe it should be a teacher's choice to select the certification and depth of instruction necessary to meet both student and community needs.*

Myth: *New course titles are more confusing for teachers and counselors, and they will not attract or interest students.*

Fact: The department has created new course description documents to better describe each course, as well as what students will know and be able to do upon course completion. The clearer course descriptions will allow teachers to set expectations for what courses should look like in the classroom and for the development of registration and recruitment materials.

About the Tennessee Department of Education

The Tennessee Department of Education strives to expand students' access to effective teachers and leaders, families' access to good schools, educators' access to resources and best practices and public access to information and data. We aim to be the fastest-improving state in the nation in terms of academic achievement by 2015.



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- If you have feedback or recommendations on proposed course names, please submit them to CTE.Questions@tn.gov for consideration.

Myth: *The most popular courses are being retired and there is a reduction of available courses – this will reduce or close our agriculture programs.*

Fact: Developing content knowledge and skills for students to be ready for both postsecondary and career opportunities were the drivers for our course revision process. Standards that provide a progression of knowledge or pathway, and introduce new topics such as Food Science and GIS, will provide more opportunities for students to be prepared to enter the workforce after high school graduation or to transition seamlessly into postsecondary.

- If you would like support or technical assistance for growing and marketing your programs, please reach out to Steven.Gass@tn.gov or Allie.Ellis@tn.gov for ideas.

Myth: *Principles of Agricultural Science and Principles of Horticulture Sciences have been moved down to the middle school.*

Fact: Content included in the *Principles of Agricultural Sciences* and *Principles of Horticulture Sciences* courses were referenced to revise the current middle school introductory course. The new course (*Introduction to Agricultural Sciences*) seeks to prepare the middle school student interested in agriculture, so that the student can make better potential career choices while developing a smoother transition into the secondary agriculture program.

- Content from these courses was also referenced to improve the standards in the foundational agriculture course, *Agriscience*, to give all students a rigorous introduction to any program of study.

Myth: *These new and revised courses are going to cost too much to implement.*

Fact: The growing cost of technology was taken into consideration during the course standards revision process. Options are outlined in many standards to allow flexibility as to the technology, equipment and supplies need for each course and program of study.

- It is well understood that not all schools in the state are able to secure funding for a livestock or small animal laboratory on campus to use with daily instruction. The standards revisions provide the opportunity to teach the basic skills using various options of resources and materials.
- Equipment lists for each program of study are now available on the [Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources website](#). For further questions on classroom materials, please reach out to Steven.Gass@tn.gov.

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Myth: *Floral Design was retired even though it is a successful course and has a large economic impact within the agriculture industry.*

Fact: Extensive research to determine the employment trends and opportunities for students in all aspects of agriculture was a major contributing factor in the decisions for proposing new and retired courses. According to *CareerOnestop – Pathways to Career Success* a real-time employment data source, the need for floral designers is decreasing at both the state and national levels, and the need for other occupations (such as veterinary occupations, food design and preparation, and other agricultural workers) have much more positive occupational outlooks, both nationally and in Tennessee.

- Employment opportunities for a Floral Designer are projected to decrease by 9% nationally from 2010-2020. Tennessee is projected to have a 25% decline in employment opportunities over the same time period. By contrast, food preparation is projected to grow by 14% in Tennessee, while Veterinary Technologists and Technicians are projected to grow 52% nationally.
- Floral design content topics were incorporated into the *Principles of Plant Science and Hydroculture* and *Greenhouse Management* courses as part of the course standards revision process.
- Recognizing that regional trends may be different than those at the state level, based on community resources and employers, a school system that has high local employment demands for floral designers, or any other retired course topic, can submit a special course request to the Tennessee Department of Education to continue offering that course.

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